

FAR FROM HOME

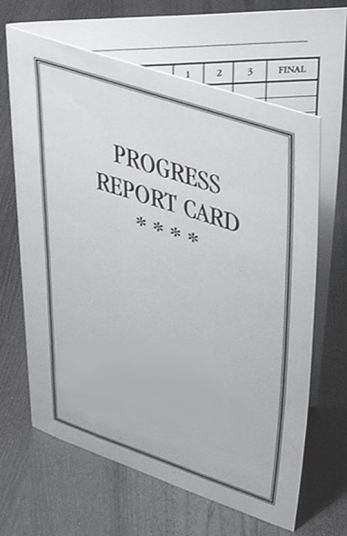


*Why—25 years
later—we are no
closer to solving
the problem of
homelessness
in Chicago*



Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

SUBJECT	GRADE	THEN & NOW
CHILDREN WHO ARE HOMELESS	F	<p>1990: Children under 18 are 15% of the homeless population</p> <p>2005: Families are 40% of the homeless population</p> <p>1974: 1 million families headed by single parents had personal incomes below 51% of the poverty line</p> <p>1991: 2.5 million families headed by single parents had personal incomes below 51% of the poverty line</p>
INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AT RISK	F	<p>Since 1992: More than 70,000 adults eliminated from Transitional Assistance in Illinois</p> <p>1996: 15,000 people lost Supplemental Security Income assistance in Illinois</p> <p>Since 1994: Approximately 150,000 families eliminated from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (welfare) assistance in Illinois</p>
JOBS AT WAGES THAT CAN SUPPORT FAMILIES	F	<p>1980: Minimum wage job lifted a family of three above poverty level</p> <p>2003: Minimum wage job provides only 74% of poverty level income for family of three</p>
SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT	F	Illinois prison population has grown 266% since 1980 due to drug epidemic and tougher sentencing laws, but substance abuse treatment facilities only meet 9% of the need
SUFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING	F	<p>1980: 14% of rental units affordable to poorest 20% of households</p> <p>2000: 7% of rental units affordable to poorest 20% of households</p>
HOUSING FOR VERY, VERY LOW INCOME	F	<p>1973: 53,000 single room occupancy units in Chicago</p> <p>1996: 13,000 single room occupancy units in Chicago</p>
DEDICATED RESOURCES—CITY OF CHICAGO	D	Created a good 10-year plan, but have dedicated minimal resources to it
DEDICATED RESOURCES—STATE OF ILLINOIS	B-	Still not enough, but have begun creating housing programs and backing them with resources
DEDICATED RESOURCES—FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	F	<p>1977-1981: Federal government created an average of 260,000 new units of subsidized housing a year</p> <p>2005: No new units proposed. Cuts in many federal housing programs proposed.</p>
HELP FOR HOMELESS YOUTH	D	<p>1980: 4 shelter beds in Chicago for homeless youth</p> <p>2005: 120 shelter beds in Chicago for homeless youth</p>



FAR FROM HOME

Why—25 years later—we are no closer to solving the problem of homelessness in Chicago

This report outlines issues that have led to increased homelessness over the past 25 years, the work done to address it, and the work we have left to do.

As 2005 draws to a close, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) is recognizing the 25th anniversary of its founding. While there is much to celebrate in terms of the accomplishments of the organization, underlying structural problems that create homelessness have gotten significantly worse. The problem continues to grow.

CCH was founded in 1980 by Travelers and Immigrants Aid, Catholic Charities, the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Eighth Day Center for Justice and a number of other social service agencies. The groups met to discuss how to provide services to visitors to Chicago on the occasion of the Pope's historic visit. Conversation quickly turned to the growing number of homeless people that were being identified, primarily at the city's airport, bus, and train stations. The group decided to form a coalition that would not provide services, but rather advocate for public policy changes that would address the root causes of homelessness.

At the time CCH was founded, homelessness was largely considered an issue that affected single adults, primarily men. By the 1990s, we began seeing more and more families experiencing homelessness. Today, 40% of the homeless population is made up of families with children. In addition, homelessness is affecting more people than just those with little or no income. A new class of "working poor" households is often paying more than 50% of its income for rent and is at high risk of homelessness. In fact, nearly 40% of homeless people in the Chicago area work but can't afford housing.

Major social factors have led to increased homelessness in Chicago over the past 25 years. These include the loss of manufacturing jobs, the loss of affordable housing through gentrification, the erosion of the safety net providing cash assistance, the growth of the crack epidemic and the war on drugs, and the withdrawal of federal support for affordable and public housing.

CCH works to address the causes of homelessness and has secured many major victories.

- In 1994, we won a campaign against Presidential Towers that resulted in more than 1,000 units of affordable housing and the first funding for the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund.
- In 1998, we passed a living wage ordinance in Chicago that requires that all city employees and city-contracted employees must earn enough to lift a family of four out of poverty.
- In 1999, we created the Illinois homeless prevention grant program that has prevented 43,000 households from becoming homeless.
- In 2005, we passed a bill to create the largest state-funded rent subsidy program in the country, the Rental Housing Support Program. The program will provide \$30 million in rental subsidies to 5,500 families in Illinois earning less than \$19,000 a year.

Despite these accomplishments that have affected thousands of people in Chicago and throughout the state, the problem continues to grow. The number of people impacted by the

factors listed above who are currently homeless or at-risk of homelessness is in the hundreds of thousands. We simply can't keep up. To truly end homelessness in Chicago we will need all levels of government to make it a priority to end homelessness—and commit the resources to do it. Without this commitment, the problem will continue to grow.

Hurricane Katrina refocused national attention on the issue of homelessness. The general public and the federal government rushed to help those made homeless by the storm with unprecedented resources. Clearly there is public sympathy around this issue. However, now that the dust has settled, Congress is considering major cuts to food, healthcare, and housing programs for the poor to offset the costs of hurricane relief. The short-term problem of homelessness created by Katrina is receiving much attention, but the problem that has existed for 25 years remains a low priority.

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Homelessness in Chicago

Homelessness emerged as a major problem in U.S. cities 25 years ago. Since that time, the problem has grown and changed—largely for the worse.

	III → THEN	III → NOW	III → 2030
Who Is Homeless?	When homelessness emerged as a concern in the early 1980s, most homeless individuals were single men. Now families make up 40% of the homeless population.		
	1990: 15% of the homeless population are children ¹ 1974: 1 million families headed by single parents had personal incomes below 51% of the poverty line ³	2005: Families are 40% of the homeless population ² 1991: 2.5 million families headed by single parents had personal incomes below 51% of the poverty line ⁴	All Americans have decent housing
Why Has Homelessness Grown Worse in Chicago and the Nation?	The steady loss of low-skill jobs and affordable housing, along with the elimination of supports for low-income people, have left more people vulnerable.		
Manufacturing	Loss of manufacturing jobs have made it impossible for low-skill, uneducated families to rise above the poverty level.		
	1980: 21.7% of Illinois jobs are manufacturing jobs ⁵ 1980: Minimum wage job lifts a family above poverty level ⁷	2003: 10.3% of Illinois jobs are manufacturing jobs ⁶ 2003: Minimum wage job provides only 74% of poverty level income for a family of three ⁸ 2003: 40% of homeless people in Chicago are working ⁹	Wages cover housing and other basic needs Wages are indexed to the cost of housing
Drugs	Introduction of cheap and highly addictive crack cocaine, combined with mandatory sentencing laws, have broken up families and made it difficult for many men to support their children.		
	Since 1980: Drug-related incarcerations have quadrupled ¹⁰	More than half of homeless men have spent time in jail or prison. One-quarter to one-third of homeless women have spent time in jail or prison ¹¹ Illinois' substance abuse treatment system only meets 9% of the need ¹²	Substance abuse treatment is available to all who need it
Erosion of the Safety Net	In the decade of the 90's, public benefits were eliminated or scaled back, leaving people without a safety net and more vulnerable to homelessness.		
	Since 1992: More than 70,000 adults eliminated from Transitional Assistance ¹³	By 1993, a study shows many of these adults are in need of basic food, clothing and housing ¹⁴	Basic income supports for those who are unemployed or cannot work

(continued)

	III → THEN	III → NOW	III → 2030
Erosion of the Safety Net (continued)	<p>1996: 15,000 people lost Supplemental Security Income (SSI)¹⁵</p> <p>Since 1994: Approximately 150,000 families eliminated from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (welfare)¹⁷</p>	<p>1998, a study of those who lost SSI shows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half have no income • Three-quarters had used food/pantry system¹⁶ <p>2003: a study of TANF families shows that 43% had no work and no welfare¹⁸</p>	
Loss of Affordable Housing	As the city gentrifies and wealthy people move back to the city center, shelters are pushed to the outskirts, rental units are converted to condos, and low-income families are priced out of neighborhoods.		
	<p>Between 1990-2000: Chicago lost 2,852 rental units¹⁹</p> <p>1980: 14% of rental units affordable to the poorest 20% of households²¹</p> <p>1973: 53,000 Single Room Occupancy units in Chicago²³</p> <p>1980s: Shelters are located throughout the city and in the downtown area, close to transportation and jobs</p>	<p>2000: Rents rose by 25-75% in 30 Chicago communities²⁰</p> <p>2000: 7% of rental units affordable to the poorest 20% of households²²</p> <p>2005: 12,700 Single Room Occupancy units in Chicago²⁴</p> <p>2005: The last two remaining loop shelters are being relocated to neighborhoods outside the central area</p>	<p>Sufficient affordable housing to meet the need</p> <p>Housing available at all income levels in most neighborhoods and affordable housing as a part of all new developments.</p>
What Role Does Government Play?			
Federal	The federal government has drastically reduced its commitment to creating affordable housing and has mandated demolition of public housing.		
	<p>1977-1981: Federal government created an average of 260,000 new units of subsidized housing a year²⁵</p> <p>1976: HUD budget authority is \$86.6 billion²⁷</p> <p>Since 1995: 16,068 units of public housing in Chicago have been demolished and only 1,296 have been created²⁹</p>	<p>2005: No new units proposed. Cuts in many federal housing programs proposed²⁶</p> <p>2004: HUD budget authority is \$34.7 billion²⁸</p>	<p>A National Housing Trust Fund to create significant new federal resources for housing.</p>
Chicago	The City's 10-year plan to eliminate homelessness has solid elements, but minimal resources to implement it.		
	<p>1980: FEMA provided the first funding for shelters because homelessness was thought to be a short-term crisis</p>	<p>2000: Experts now believe that the shelter system perpetuates the problem, so Chicago has developed a plan to redirect resources to prevention and permanent housing with supportive services</p>	<p>Dedicated resources to implement the 10-year plan</p>

	→ THEN	→ NOW	→ 2030
Bright Spots			
State of Illinois	Twenty years ago, the State of Illinois played no role in housing or homelessness. Today it has a number of programs.		
	1980: No state funding for housing or homelessness	2005: Affordable Housing Trust Fund: \$40-50 million per year Homelessness Prevention: \$5 million a year Emergency Food and Shelter: \$8.9 million a year Supportive Housing Services: \$9.75 million a year Rental Housing Support Program: \$30 million a year	
Services for Homeless Youth	Although there are still not enough resources for homeless youth, some things have improved marginally.		
	1980: 4 shelter beds in Chicago for homeless youth 1980: Illegal to provide shelter for minors	2005: 120 shelter beds in Chicago for homeless youth 2005: Legal to shelter minors	

Endnotes

- ¹ 1990 Report from Interagency Council on the Homeless
- ² U.S. Conference of Mayor's Report on Hunger and Homelessness, 2004
- ³ Child Indicators: Homeless Families and Children, Eugene M. Lewit and Linda Schurmann Baker, The Future of Children Journal, 1996
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ Bureau of Economic Analysis/Federal Reserve Bank
- ⁶ Ibid
- ⁷ Working Hard, Fall Short, America's Working Families and Pursuit of Economic Security, Tom Waldron, Brandon Roberts and Andrew Reamer, October 2004
- ⁸ Ibid
- ⁹ Regional Roundtable on Homelessness, 2001. Facing Homelessness: A Study of Homelessness in Chicago and the Suburbs
- ¹⁰ AIDS Foundation of Chicago
- ¹¹ 2005 survey by the Chicago Department. of Human Services
- ¹² Cook County Offenders Lose Out in Drug Treatment Revival, Rui Kaneya, The Chicago Reporter, May, 2001
- ¹³ Illinois Department of Human Services
- ¹⁴ No Work, No Welfare: Able-Bodied Men on the Streets of Chicago. Meeting the Employment and Training Needs of the City's Destitute Men. Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance, August 1993

- ¹⁵ Without a Net: A Study of Early Impacts of Supplemental Security Income Benefits Elimination for Persons with Disabilities due to Drug and Alcohol Abuse in Cook County, Illinois. Impacts, Policy Alternatives and Action Steps. Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance, May 1998
- ¹⁶ Ibid
- ¹⁷ Illinois Department of Human Services
- ¹⁸ Illinois Families Study, The University Consortium on Welfare Reform, July 2004
- ¹⁹ Chicago Rehab Network, Affordable Housing Fact Book, 2005
- ²⁰ Ibid
- ²¹ Measuring the Nation's Rental Housing Affordability Problems, Eric S. Belsky, Jack Goodman and Rachel Drew, Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2005
- ²² Ibid
- ²³ Stemming the Loss of SRO Housing, Lakefront SRO, 1996
- ²⁴ Chicago Department of Housing
- ²⁵ In Search of Shelter: The Growing Shortage of Affordable Rental Housing, Jennifer Daskal, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June, 1998
- ²⁶ National Low Income Housing Coalition
- ²⁷ Changing Priorities: The Federal Budget and Housing Assistance 1976-2005, Cushing N. Dolbeare, Irene Basloe Saraf, Sheila Crowley. The National Low Income Housing Coalition, October 2004
- ²⁸ Ibid
- ²⁹ National Center on Poverty Law, 2004



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